

Petition to remove Womad NZ headline act Ziggy Marley



Stephanie Ockhuysen

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A petition is calling for Ziggy Marley to be removed as headline act for Womad 2024 because of his position on Israel.

SUPPLIED

Womad NZ organisers are under pressure to remove the festival's headliner Ziggy Marley due to concerns over his stance on the Israel–Hamas war.

A petition to remove him from the festival, which takes place in Taranaki on March 15 - 17, was started last month by hala Aotearoa, Artists for ceasefire, and Aotearoa for ceasefire.

It has gained 1600 signatures since January 16.

A Womad NZ spokesperson said they had no planned changes to the 2024 line-up in light of the petition.

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The petition is based on Marley reportedly attending a fundraiser in Los Angeles in 2018 for the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF), which raised more than \$60 million.

Marley, a Jamaican reggae musician and son of Bob Marley, is married to Orly Agai Marley, an Israeli of Iranian-Jewish descent.

His support for the IDF was seen in a new light by many after the October 7 Hamas cross border raid into Israel from Gaza in which an estimated 1200 people, mostly civilians, were killed and 250 people were taken captive, according to Israeli authorities.

The Hamas-run health ministry says more than 28,600 people, mainly women and children have been killed in Gaza by Israeli forces since then.

Five days after Hamas' surprise attack the reggae singer also signed an open letter by Creative Community for Peace (CCFP) in support of Israel.

The letter called on other Hollywood members "to speak out forcefully against Hamas, to support Israel, to refrain from sharing misinformation about the war, and do whatever is in their power to urge the terrorist organization to return the innocent hostages to their families".



Womad is on in New Plymouth from March 15-17.

VANESSA LAURIE / STUFF

Marley is also due to play at WOMADelaide the weekend before Taranaki's festival, a performance which also has a petition against it.

"Ziggy has clearly come out in support of Israel."

Sakhr Munassar, of community arts group hala Aotearoa, which launched the petition said, Munassar claimed he shared a post about Marley online and tagged Womad in it to respond and was blocked.

Munassar said he bought tickets to Womad in June, excited to attend after hearing good things about the festival.

Munassar said he would be contacting organisers for a refund on his tickets. However, when Marley was announced as headliner, he became concerned.

He said they're not against Womad, they just want Marley removed.

"For a NZ charitable association to bring someone who is clearly on one side of this historic genocide and bring him on a payroll to promote peace is deceitful."

"We don't want to be on the wrong side of history."

While Womad NZ did not respond to claims of deleting comments and blocking people on social media, a spokesperson said they had no planned changes to the 2024 line-up.

A statement from Womad New Zealand Charitable Trust Board said it acknowledged the call for the removal of Marley from the festival.

"We respect their right to express peaceful opposition to Mr Marley's participation. WOMAD NZ stands with all citizens of the world calling for an end to violence and war in the Middle East and all corners of the world."

Tui Ora, a major sponsor of the festival, said the organisation supported Womad's statement on the Marley issue.

- Taranaki Daily News

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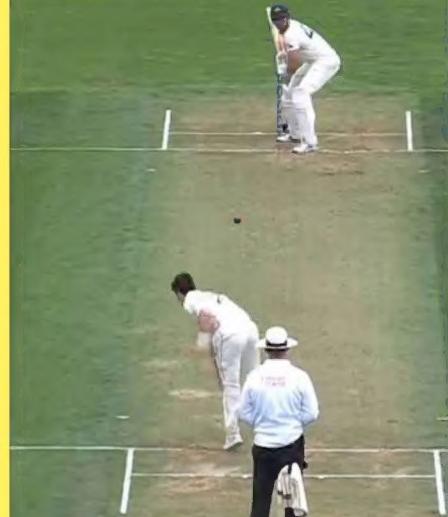


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